

## Sewage treatment plant rebuild, land use studied

by Ian Bauer

Posted: 01/14/2011 09:09:22 AM PST

Updated: 01/14/2011 09:09:23 AM PST

A draft master plan for the long-term reshaping of a 2,600-acre shoreline site and the rebuilding of the adjacent San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant will be the focus of a two-hour community workshop in North San Jose next week.

The meeting will be held at George Mayne Elementary School on Wednesday, Jan. 19 and will allow residents to view and give their input on the project's final recommended alternative master plan, which considers recreation, jobs-based development, a clean tech center, trails and natural habitat, and a retail area located near the treatment facility at 700 Los Esteros Road, on the Milpitas-San Jose border.

Jennifer Garnett, a San Jose Environmental Services Department spokesperson, said the project's recommended alternative plan will allow for the future reuse of the shoreline lands and include the estimated \$2.2-billion renovation of an aging water treatment plant facility that operates continuously 365 days a year.

"It's always been a two-pronged plan," Garnett said, adding it may take up to 30 years to complete. "It looks at the land use and the technical component to rebuild the treatment plant."

### The 30-year plan

The nearly 55-year-old pollution control plant is co-owned by the cities of San Jose and Santa Clara and serves approximately 1.4-million residents in the cities of San Jose, Santa Clara, Milpitas, Cupertino, Campbell, Los Gatos, and Monte Sereno and Saratoga.

City of San Jose reports state the

master plan project has been a three-year effort involving the merging of three prior plans to develop a technical alternative to rebuild the aging plant and enable it to meet future regulatory requirements and population demands in the most sustainable and energy-efficient manners feasible. The proposed alternative plan includes process changes meant to reduce odors and shrink the plant's footprint, enabling new land uses along the South San Francisco Bay shoreline.

This alternative envisions:

Significant repairs and rehabilitation at the plant as well as a major change in how bio-solids are treated. The current process of using more than 700 acres of open-air lagoons and drying beds is proposed to be phased out over the next 15 years and replaced with a covered, mechanical process.

A mix of economic development with a focus on clean tech; recreational uses including trails and parks; and habitat restoration of uplands and marshlands.

In addition, the plan features a draft recommended land-use alternative. The technical evaluation resulted in a future plant footprint smaller than the area currently used for the treatment process. The purpose of the land-use alternatives evaluation was to consider possible economic, environmental and social uses of the 2,600-acre site enabled by the plant's technical changes that reduce odors and

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chemical use.

Major items included in the land-use strategy include:

Determining the appropriate alignment for levees to protect this critical facility from future sea level rise. City of San Jose staff have been working with the Army Corps of Engineers and Santa Clara Valley Water District's South Bay Shoreline Study.

Meeting the plant's permit requirement to plan future uses for former salt pond A18, purchased by the plant as additional buffer land in 2005.

Planning for land-use opportunities that financially benefit the plant and its tributary cities.

Ensuring consistency with City of San Jose Envision 2040 process and its Green Vision to provide jobs and opportunities for clean tech development.

Planning for the Bay Trail connection through this site and providing other recreational opportunities.

n Protecting existing habitats and planning for environmental enhancement opportunities.

The draft recommended alternative includes the following features as part of a land-use plan that incorporates input received throughout the project:

Economic development (total 300 acres plus a renewable energy field).

Twenty to 35 acres of retail at the frontage of state Route 237.

About 220 to 235 acres of office and light industrial with a focus on clean tech both along the frontage of Route 237 and in the current bio-solids drying area.

About 45 acres along Highway 237 to allow for a clean tech and water institute that could be an incubator and demonstration facility.

Approximately 60 acres for a renewable energy field, in addition to solar installations near the plant's operational area, on roof-tops, and the existing 35-acre waste to energy site.

Road connections that would include a link to Dixon Landing Road and a connection from Nortech to Zanker Road.

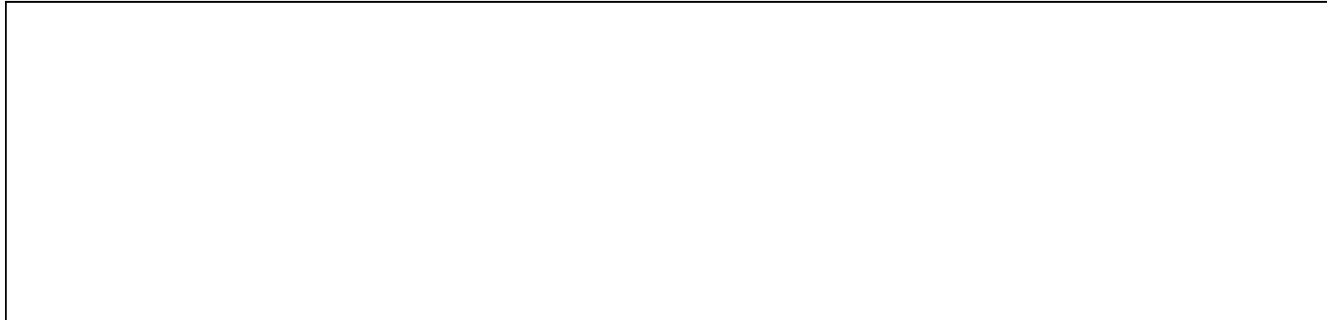
The plan also calls for environmental protection and restoration of the natural habitats of birds and other wildlife.

Those animals and the coverage areas include 190 acres of burrowing owl habitat; 920 acres of salt marsh habitat and tidal areas, which also benefit flood protection; expanded Coyote Creek delta and connection to the bay; restored Artesian Slough and additional riparian areas (225 acres); freshwater wetlands to further polish the plant's effluent (60 acres); and multiple plant discharge areas to diffuse the plant's freshwater impact on the bay environment, reports state.

The plan offers the possibility of recreational uses on these lands.

Those options, according to reports, could include a 40-acre park with sports fields and connection to restored Artesian Slough, as well as access to retail areas; a Bay Trail connection, for a total of 16 miles of trails; 50 acres of flexible open space with connection to habitat areas; access to the plant's freshwater wetlands for bird watching and hiking (60 acres); and opportunities to locate nature and education centers that complement the existing Don Edwards Refuge Education Center.

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Development of the plant lands is contingent on market demand. In addition, phasing of the development and availability of land will depend on infrastructure improvements at the plant to control odors (estimated to be completed between 2015 and 2025) and change the solids processing technologies (completed no earlier than year 2025).

At build-out, reports state the positive fiscal impact is projected to be \$1.1 million based on property and sales tax revenue, with substantial additional benefit to Santa Clara County and local school districts. The annual projected ground lease revenue at build-out is projected to be \$10.5 million. While the timing of build out and the potential resulting lease revenue does not correlate with the infrastructure needs of the plant, it has the potential to offset future operating and maintenance costs. According to reports, the jobs created by this plan are projected at 15,200 with additional indirect jobs as well as substantial construction jobs.

The plan also secures the areas around the plant for future private development likely to be paid for through government grants or private development monies that may include clean tech industries. No dollar amount is attached to this part of the long-term plan yet.

"Rather than be reactive, we're taking into account the needs of the plant, the environmental consideration and the neighboring land-use considerations," Garnett said. "It preserves that area for future development."

At the Jan. 19 meeting, Garnett said people will have the chance to provide written comments that will be included with the final alternative draft plan. Two key questions asked of residents will be: "What do you like about the plan?" and "What would you like to see changed?"

Garnett said comments taken from residents will go toward a formal final approval of the master plan scheduled in April before the San Jose and Santa Clara city councils.

## Guiding principles

Since the disclosure of the latest plan in December, neighboring Milpitas has expressed concern over the treatment plant project. City of Milpitas has generally been supportive of this project through what that city calls "Milpitas Guiding Principles," which acknowledge support for City of San Jose's guiding concepts of sustainability toward the environment, economic and equity factors.

"The city understands that this is an important project; it's a very old plant for the City of San Jose that Milpitas also uses," Kathleen Phalen, City of Milpitas' utility engineer, said.

However, Phalen said City of Milpitas formally requested as part of the water pollution control plant project that outdated open-air, bio-solid drying beds and lagoons considered the sources of odors that affect Milpitas and cause a public nuisance for residents there be eliminated.

Phalen said Milpitas City Council last August voted to adopt a resolution to seek removal of those drying beds. In December, she noted San Jose City Council formally directed their own city staff to acknowledge City of Milpitas' concerns and prioritize elimination of the odors generated by the plant, possibly within the next 15 years.

"And they will attempt to do it sooner than that," Phalen said. "For Milpitas, it's a major issue."

According to Garnett, the treatment plant plan calls for the plant to move away from drying beds for bio-solids. She added, however, that moving as

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quickly as possible would still mean taking the time perhaps years to explore feasible pilot programs and technologies that will help eliminate the need for bio-solid, open air drying beds altogether.

"We'll move as quickly as we can, but this is not going to happen overnight," Garnett said.

The San Jose/Santa Clara Water Pollution Control Plant community meeting will be held 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 19 at George Mayne Elementary, 5030 N. First St., San Jose. For more information, call 945-5182 or visit [rebuildtheplant.org](http://rebuildtheplant.org).

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